

Charles R. and Lettie L. Bell House
200 13th Street
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5862

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
4/2.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CHARLES R. AND LETTIE L. BELL HOUSE

HABS
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HABS No. PA-5862

Location: 200 13th Street

Date of Erection: 1900

Builders: Bunker & Fleck

Description: The Bell House is the most intact of three apparently identical houses built on the north side of 13th Street by the developers Bunker & Fleck. The two-and-a-half-story, two-bay frame house has an asymmetrically placed cross gable at right extending square from the side-gable eave over a two-story hexagonal bay window. A one-story porch has a half-width gable placed in opposition at the left side of the house over the entrance door.

Ornamental woodwork provides textured contrast to the horizontal novelty wood siding. Sets of paired brackets are spaced below the flat surface of the eaves and additional brackets meet at pendants below the projecting gable edge. The gable window splits a half-round stick-work medallion; the front gables of the roof and porch, as well as the front porch wall, are sided in hexagonal shingles. Additional pressed-work decoration is also used in both front gables.

The concrete block porch foundation is old enough to sport a coal-chute door. A small projecting addition has been made to the left side of the structure.

History: Developers in the Fourth Ward built modestly, providing small groups of working-class houses as infill between existing structures. The property at this address, like 1222* and 1224* 2nd Ave., was part of a larger purchase made by John Thompson, a conductor, from John and Emma Wright in August 1872.

James P. and Jean H. Graham sold the lot to B. Bunker and J. S. Fleck, "trading as Bunker and Fleck," for \$2,250 on May 9, 1900. Benjamin Bunker and James S. Fleck listed themselves as "Contractors and Builders and Lumber Dealers, 410-420 7th Ave." Only six weeks after the purchase, Bunker & Fleck had sold the current 39' x 50' lot, a third of the property, with its new house, to Charles R. Bell for \$2,200. Amos C. Davis, Jr., purchased the house next door on the same day for \$2,280; George A. Klesius's house at the alley's edge went for \$1,600.

In the 1900 directory, machinist Charles R. Bell is the only new owner to be living on site. Amos C. Davis, a foreman, was not yet a resident in his new house. George A. Klesius, working in the roofing and general jobbing business, never lived here.¹

Title to the house was transferred among various members of the Bell family until quite recently. Charles R. Bell and his wife, Lettie J., were living here in 1945, along with Esther L. Bell who worked as a teller at the First National Bank. Charles Bell died in January 1949, and Esther Bell sold the house to the current owner in March 1986.

Sources: Maps: 1894, 1909 (1888 and 1894 maps were not available for this address). Deed books: 28/218, 51/155, 127/276, 127/432, 127/418, 127/490, 1126/366. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also

¹As discussed in the Fourth Ward chapter, Klesius was engaged in a contractor-based barter system in which his sheet-metal and various other types of work were exchanged with builders for an interest in completed structures. This may explain the lower price he paid for his house.

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additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.